3088

HISTORIC

DOUBTS

RELATIVE TO

Whateley!
(see Church's
Index.)

NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE.

Ly. Is the Line of this taken from some
remarks of Johnson to the same effect. Also
case of the conquest of Canada - Wilkes

"Is not the same reason available in theology and in politics? . . .
Will you follow truth but to a certain point?"

Vindication of natural Society, by a late noble writer.

FIFTH EDITION.

LONDON:
B. FELLOWES, LUDGATE STREET.

1833.

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LONDON:

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PREFACE.

SEVERAL of the readers of this little work have derived much amusement from the mistakes of others respecting its nature and object. It has been by some represented as a serious attempt to inculcate universal scepticism; while others have considered it as a jeu d'esprit, &c. The Author does not however design to entertain his readers with accounts of the mistakes which have arisen respecting it; because many of them, he is convinced, would be received with incredulity; and he could not, without an indelicate exposure of individuals, verify his anecdotes.

But some sensible readers have complained of the difficulty of determining *what* they are to believe. Of the existence of Buonaparte, indeed, they are fully convinced; nor, if it were left doubtful, would any important results ensue; but if they can give no *satisfactory reason* for their conviction, how can they know, it is asked, that they may not be mistaken as to other points of greater consequence, on which they are no less fully convinced, but on which all men are not agreed? The Author has accordingly been solicited to endeavour to frame some canons which may furnish a standard for determining what evidence is to be received. This he

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conceives to be impracticable, except to that extent to which it is accomplished by a sound system of logic. The full accomplishment of it, indeed, would confer on man the unattainable attribute of infallibility.

But the difficulty complained of he conceives to arise from their *mistating the grounds of their own conviction.* They are convinced, indeed, and perhaps with very sufficient reason; but they imagine this reason to be a different one from what it is. The evidence to which they have assented is applied to their minds in a different manner from that in which they believe it is, and suppose it ought to be, applied. And when challenged to defend and justify their own belief, they feel at a loss, because they are attempting to maintain a position which is not in fact that in which their force lies.

For a development of the nature, the consequences, and the remedies of this mistake, the reader is referred to "Hinds on Inspiration," p. 30—46. If such a development is to be found in other books, the Author of the following pages at least has never chanced to meet with any attempt of the kind.

It is only necessary to add, that as this work first appeared in the year 1819, many things are spoken of in the present tense to which the past would now be applicable.

The Postscript was added to the third edition, which was published soon after the accounts of Buonaparte's death reached us.

HISTORIC DOUBTS

RELATIVE TO

NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE.

LONG as the public attention has been occupied by the extraordinary Personage from whose ambition we are supposed to have so narrowly escaped, the subject seems to have lost scarcely any thing of its interest. We are still occupied in recounting the exploits, discussing the character, inquiring into the present situation, and even conjecturing as to the future prospects of Napoleon Buonaparte.

Nor is this at all to be wondered at, if we consider the very extraordinary nature of those exploits, and of that character; their greatness and extensive importance, as well as the unexampled strangeness of the events, and also, that strong additional stimulant, the mysterious

uncertainty that hangs over the character of the man. If it be doubtful whether any history (exclusive of such as is avowedly fabulous) ever attributed to its hero such a series of wonderful achievements compressed into so small a space of time, it is certain that to no one were ever assigned so many dissimilar characters.

It is true indeed that party prejudices have drawn a favourable and an unfavourable portrait, of almost every eminent man; but amidst all the diversities of colouring, something of the same general outline is always distinguishable. And even the virtues in the one description, bear some resemblance to the vices of another; rashness, for instance, will be called courage, or courage, rashness; heroic firmness, and obstinate pride, will correspond in the two opposite descriptions; and in some leading features, both will agree. Neither the friends nor the enemies, of Philip of Macedon, or of Julius Cæsar, ever questioned their COURAGE, or their MILITARY SKILL.

With Buonaparte however it has been otherwise. This obscure Corsican adventurer, a man, according to some, of extraordinary talents and courage, according to others, of very moderate abilities, and a rank coward, advanced rapidly in the French army, obtained

a high command, gained a series of important victories, and, elated by success, embarked in an expedition against Egypt; which was planned and conducted, according to some, with the most consummate skill, according to others, with the utmost wildness and folly: he was unsuccessful however; and leaving the army of Egypt in a very distressed situation, he returned to France, and found the nation, or at least the army, so favourably disposed towards him, that he was enabled, with the utmost ease, to overthrow the existing government, and obtain for himself the supreme power; at first under the modest appellation of Consul, but afterwards with the more sounding title of Emperor. While in possession of this power, he overthrew the most powerful coalitions of the other European states against him; and though driven from the sea by the British fleets, overran nearly the whole continent, triumphant: finishing a war, not unfrequently in a single campaign, he entered the capitals of most of the hostile potentates, deposed and created kings at his pleasure, and appeared the virtual sovereign of the chief part of the continent, from the frontiers of Spain to those of Russia. Even those countries we find him invading with prodigious

armies, defeating their forces, penetrating to their capitals, and threatening their total subjugation. But at Moscow his progress is stopped: a winter of unusual severity, cooperating with the efforts of the Russians, totally destroys his enormous host; and the German sovereigns throw off the yoke, and combine to oppose him. He raises another vast army, which is also ruined at Leipsic: and again another, with which, like a second Antæus, he for some time maintains himself in France; but is finally defeated, deposed, and banished to the island of Elba, of which the sovereignty is conferred on him. Thence he returns, in about nine months, at the head of 600 men, to attempt the deposition of King Louis, who had been peaceably recalled; the French nation declare in his favour, and he is reinstated without a struggle. He raises another great army to oppose the allied powers, which is totally defeated at Waterloo: he is a second time deposed, surrenders to the British, and is placed in confinement at the island of St. Helena. Such is the outline of the eventful history presented to us; in the detail of which, however, there is almost every conceivable variety of statement; while the motives and conduct of the chief actor are involved in still

greater doubt, and the subject of still more eager controversy.

In the midst of these controversies, the preliminary question, concerning the *existence* of this extraordinary personage, seems never to have occurred to any one as a matter of doubt; and to show even the smallest hesitation in admitting it, would probably be regarded as an excess of scepticism; on the ground that this point has always been taken for granted by the disputants on all sides, being indeed implied by the very nature of their disputes.

But is it in fact found that *undisputed* points are always such as have been the most carefully examined as to the evidence on which they rest? that facts or principles which are taken for granted, without controversy, as the common basis of opposite opinions, are always themselves established on sufficient grounds? On the contrary, is not any such fundamental point, from the very circumstance of its being taken for granted at once, and the attention drawn off to some other question, likely to be admitted on insufficient evidence, and the flaws in that evidence overlooked? Experience will teach us that such instances often occur: witness the well-known anecdote of the Royal Society; to whom King Charles II. proposed

as a question, whence it is that a vessel of water receives no addition of weight from a live fish being put into it, though it does, if the fish be dead. Various solutions of great ingenuity were proposed, discussed, objected to, and defended; nor was it till they had been long bewildered in the inquiry, that it occurred to them to *try the experiment;* by which they at once ascertained, that the phenomenon which they were striving to account for,—which was the acknowledged basis, and substratum, as it were, of their debates,—had no existence but in the invention of the witty monarch.

Another instance of the same kind is so very remarkable that I cannot forbear mentioning it. It was objected to the system of Copernicus when first brought forward, that if the Earth turned on its axis as he represented, a stone dropped from the summit of a tower would not fall at the foot of it, but at a great distance to the west; *in the same manner as a stone dropped from the mast-head of a ship in full sail, does not fall at the foot of the mast, but towards the stern.* To this it was answered, that a stone being a *part* of the earth obeys the same laws, and moves with it, whereas it is no part of the ship; of which

consequently its motion is independent. This solution was admitted by some, but opposed by others; and the controversy went on with spirit; nor was it till *one hundred years* after the death of Copernicus, that, the experiment being tried, it was ascertained that the stone thus dropped from the head of the mast, *does* fall at the foot of it! *

Let it be observed that I am not now impugning any one particular point; but merely shewing generally, that what is *unquestioned* is not necessarily unquestionable; since men will often, at the very moment when they are accurately sifting the evidence of some disputed point, admit hastily, and on the most insufficient grounds, what they have been accustomed to see taken for granted.

The celebrated Hume † has pointed out also the readiness with which men believe, on very

* Οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἕτοιμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται. Thucyd. b. i. c. 20.

† "With what greediness are the miraculous accounts of "travellers received, their descriptions of sea and land mon- "sters, their relations of wonderful adventures, strange men, "and uncouth manners." *Hume's Essay on Miracles*, p. 179, 12mo.; p. 185. 8vo. 1767; p. 117. 8vo. 1817.

N. B. In order to give every possible facility of reference, three editions of Hume's Essays have been generally employed; a 12mo. London, 1756, and two 8vo. editions.

slight evidence, any story that pleases their imagination by its admirable and marvellous character. Such hasty credulity, however, as he well remarks, is utterly unworthy of a philosophical mind; which should rather suspend its judgment the more, in proportion to the strangeness of the account; and yield to none but the most decisive and unimpeachable proofs.

Let it then be allowed us, as is surely reasonable, just to inquire, with respect to the extraordinary story I have been speaking of, on what evidence we believe it. We shall be told that it is *notorious;* i. e. in plain English, it is very *much talked about.* But as the generality of those who talk about Buonaparte do not even pretend to speak from *their own authority,* but merely to repeat what they have casually heard, we cannot reckon them as in any degree witnesses; but must allow ninety-nine hundredths of what we are told, to be mere hear-say, which would not be at all the more worthy of credit even if it were repeated by ten times as many more. As for those who profess to have *personally known* Napoleon Buonaparte, and to have *themselves witnessed* his transactions, I write not for them: *if any such there be,* who are inwardly conscious of

the truth of all they relate, I have nothing to say to them, but to beg that they will be tolerant and charitable towards their neighbours, who have not the same means of ascertaining the truth; and who may well be excused for remaining doubtful about such extraordinary events, till most unanswerable proofs shall be adduced.

Let us however endeavour to trace up some of this hear-say evidence as far towards its source as we are able. Most persons would refer to the *newspapers* as the authority from which their knowledge on the subject was derived: so that, generally speaking, we may say, it is on the testimony of the newspapers that men believe in the existence and exploits of Napoleon Buonaparte.

It is rather a remarkable circumstance, that it is common to hear Englishmen speak of the impudent fabrications of foreign newspapers, and express wonder that any one can be found to credit them; while they conceive that, in this favoured land, the liberty of the press is a sufficient security for veracity. It is true they often speak contemptuously of such "newspaper stories" as last but a short time; indeed they continually see them contradicted within a day or two in the same paper, or their

falsity detected by some journal of an opposite party; but still whatever is *long adhered to* and often *repeated*, especially if it also appear in *several different* papers, (and this, though they notoriously copy from one another,) is almost sure to be generally believed. Whence this high respect which is practically paid to newspaper authority? Do men think that because a witness has been perpetually detected in falsehood, he may therefore be the more safely believed whenever he is *not* detected? or does adherence to a story, and frequent repetition of it, render it the more credible? On the contrary, is it not a common remark in other cases, that a liar will generally stand to and reiterate what he has once said, merely because he *has* said it?

Let us if possible divest ourselves of this superstitious veneration for every thing that appears "in print," and examine a little more systematically the evidence which is adduced.

I suppose it will not be denied, that the three following are among the most important points to be ascertained, in deciding on the credibility of witnesses; first, whether they have the means of gaining correct information; secondly, whether they have any interest in

concealing truth, or propagating falsehood; and, thirdly, whether they agree in their testimony. Let us examine the present witnesses upon all these points.

First, what means have the editors of newspapers for gaining correct information? We know not, except from their own statements. Besides what is copied from other journals, foreign or British, (which is usually more than three-fourths of the news published,*) they profess to refer to the authority of certain private correspondents abroad; *who* these

* "Suppose a fact to be transmitted through twenty persons; the first communicating it to the second, the second to the third, &c., and let the probability of each testimony be expressed by nine-tenths, (that is, suppose that of ten reports made by each witness, nine only are true,) then, at every time the story passes from one witness to another the evidence is reduced to nine-tenths of what it was before. Thus after it has passed through the whole twenty, the evidence will be found to be less than one-eighth." La Place. *Essai philosophique sur les probabilités.*

That is, the chances for the fact thus attested being true, will be, according to this distinguished calculator, less than one in eight. Very few of the common newspaper-stories however, relating to foreign countries, could be traced, if the matter were carefully investigated, up to an actual eye-witness, even through twenty intermediate witnesses; and many of the steps of our ladder would, I fear, prove but rotten; few of the reporters would deserve to have *one in ten* fixed as the proportion of their false accounts.

correspondents are, what means *they* have of obtaining information, or whether they exist at all, we have no way of ascertaining. We find ourselves in the condition of the Hindoos, who are told by their priests, that the earth stands on an elephant, and the elephant on a tortoise; but are left to find out for themselves what the tortoise stands on, or whether it stands on any thing at all.

So much for our clear knowledge of the means of *information* possessed by these witnesses; next, for the grounds on which we are to calculate on their *veracity*.

Have they not a manifest interest in circulating the wonderful accounts of Napoleon Buonaparte and his achievements, whether true or false? Few would read newspapers if they did not sometimes find wonderful or important news in them; and we may safely say that no subject was ever found so inexhaustibly interesting as the present.

It may be urged, however, that there are several adverse political parties of which the various public prints are respectively the organs, and who would not fail to expose each other's fabrications.* Doubtless they would,

* "I did not mention the difficulty of detecting a falsehood in any private or even public history, at the time and

if they could do so without at the same time exposing *their own*; but identity of interests may induce a community of operations up to a certain point. And let it be observed, that the object of contention between these rival parties is, *who* shall have the administration of public affairs, the control of public expenditure, and the disposal of places; the question, I say, is, not, whether the people shall be governed or not, but, *by which party* they shall be governed;—not whether the taxes shall be paid or not, but *who* shall *receive* them. Now it must be admitted, that Buonaparte is a political bugbear, most convenient to any administration: "if you do not adopt our measures "and reject those of our opponents, Buona- "parte will be sure to prevail over you; if "you do not submit to the Government, at "least under *our* administration, this formid- "able enemy will take advantage of your in- "subordination, to conquer and enslave you: "pay your taxes cheerfully, or the tremen- "dous Buonaparte will take all from you."

"place where it is said to happen; much more where the "scene is removed to ever so small a distance. . . . . "But the matter never comes to "any issue, if trusted to the common method of altercation "and debate and flying rumours." *Hume's Essay on Miracles*, p. 195. 12mo; p. 200, 201. 8vo. 1767; p. 127. 8vo. 1817.

Buonaparte, in short, was the burden of every song; his redoubted name was the charm which always succeeded in unloosing the purse-strings of the nation. And let us not be too sure, safe as we now think ourselves, that some occasion may not occur for again producing on the stage so useful a personage: it is not merely to naughty children in the nursery that the threat of being "given to Buonaparte" has proved effectual.

It is surely probable, therefore, that, with an object substantially the same, all parties may have availed themselves of one common instrument. It is not necessary to suppose that for this purpose they secretly entered into a formal agreement: though by the way, there are reports afloat, that the editors of the *Courier* and *Morning Chronicle* hold amicable consultations as to the conduct of their public warfare: I will not take upon me to say that this is incredible; but at any rate it is not necessary for the establishment of the probability I contend for. Neither again would I imply that *all* newspaper-editors are utterers of forged stories "knowing them to be "forged;" most likely the great majority of them publish what they find in other papers with the same simplicity that their readers

peruse it; and therefore, it must be observed, are not at all more proper than their readers to be cited as authorities.

Still it will be said, that unless we suppose a regularly preconcerted plan, we must at least expect to find great discrepancies in the accounts published. Though they might adopt the general outline of facts, one from another, they would have to fill up the detail for themselves; and in this therefore we should meet with infinite and irreconcileable variety.

Now this is precisely the point I am tending to; for the fact exactly accords with the above supposition; the discordance and mutual contradictions of these witnesses being such as would alone throw a considerable shade of doubt over their testimony. It is not in minute circumstances alone that the discrepancy appears, such as might be expected to appear in a narrative substantially true; but in very great and leading transactions, and such as are very intimately connected with the supposed hero. For instance, it is by no means agreed whether Buonaparte led in person the celebrated charge over the bridge of Lodi, (for *celebrated* it certainly is, as well as the siege of Troy, whether either event ever really took place or no,) or was safe in the rear, while

Augereau performed the exploit. The same doubt hangs over the charge of the French cavalry at Waterloo. It is no less uncertain whether or no this strange personage poisoned in Egypt an hospital-full of his own soldiers; and butchered in cold blood a garrison that had surrendered. But not to multiply instances; the battle of Borodino, which is represented as one of the greatest ever fought, is unequivocally claimed as a victory by both parties; nor is the question decided at this day. We have official accounts on both sides, circumstantially detailed, in the names of supposed respectable persons, professing to have been present on the spot, yet totally irreconcileable. *Both* these accounts *may* be false; but since *one* of them *must* be false, that one (it is no matter *which* we suppose) proves incontrovertibly this important maxim; that *it is possible for a narrative — however circumstantial — however steadily maintained — however public, and however important, the events it relates — however grave the authority on which it is published — to be nevertheless an entire fabrication!*

Many of the events which have been recorded were probably believed much the more readily and firmly, from the apparent caution

and hesitation with which they were at first published,—the vehement contradiction in our papers of many pretended French accounts,—and the abuse lavished upon them for falsehood, exaggeration, and gasconade. But is it not possible,—is it not indeed perfectly natural,—that the publishers even of known falsehood should assume this cautious demeanour, and this abhorrence of exaggeration, in order the more easily to gain credit? Is it not also very possible, that those who actually believed what they published, may have suspected mere *exaggeration*, in stories which were entire *fictions?* Many men have that sort of simplicity, that they think themselves quite secure against being deceived, provided they believe only *part* of the story they hear; when perhaps the whole is equally false. So that perhaps these simple-hearted editors, who were so vehement against lying bulletins, and so wary in announcing their great news, were in the condition of a clown, who thinks he has bought a great bargain of a Jew, because he has beat down the price perhaps from a guinea to a crown, for some article that is not really worth a groat.

With respect to the character of Buonaparte, the dissonance is if possible still greater.

According to some he was a wise, humane, magnanimous hero: others paint him as a monster of cruelty, meanness, and perfidy: some, even of those who are the most inveterate against him, speak very highly of his political and military ability; others place him on the very verge of insanity. But allowing that all this may be the colouring of party-prejudice, (which surely is allowing a great deal,) there is one point to which such a solution will hardly apply: if there be any thing that can be clearly ascertained in history, one would think it must be the *personal courage* of a *military man;* yet here we are as much at a loss as ever; at the very same times and on the same occasions, he is described by different writers as a man of undaunted intrepidity, and as an absolute poltroon.

What then are we to believe? if we are disposed to credit all that is told us, we must believe in the existence not only of one, but of two or three Buonapartes; if we admit nothing but what is well authenticated, we shall be compelled to doubt of the existence of any.*

* "We entertain a suspicion concerning any matter of "fact, when the witnesses *contradict* each other; when they

It appears, then, that those on whose testimony the existence and actions of Buonaparte are generally believed, fail in ALL the most essential points on which the credibility of witnesses depends: first, we have no assurance that they have access to correct information; secondly, they have an apparent interest in propagating falsehood; and, thirdly, they palpably contradict each other in the most important points.

Another circumstance which throws additional suspicion on these tales is, that the whig-party, as they are called, — the warm advocates for liberty, and opposers of the encroachments of monarchical power, — have for some time past strenuously espoused the cause, and vindicated the character of Buonaparte, who is represented by all as having been, if not a tyrant, at least an absolute despot. One of the most forward in this cause is a gentleman, who once stood foremost in holding up this very man to public execration,—who first published, and long maintained against popular incredulity, the accounts of his atrocities in Egypt. Now that such a course

" are of a *suspicious* character; when they have an *interest* " in what they affirm." *Hume's Essay on Miracles*, p. 172. 12mo; p. 176. 8vo. 1767; p. 113. 8vo. 1817.

should be adopted, for party-purposes, by those who are aware that the whole story is a fiction, and the hero of it imaginary, seems not very incredible: but if they believed in the real existence of this despot, I cannot conceive how they could so forsake their principles as to advocate his cause, and eulogize his character.

After all, it may be expected that many who perceive the force of these objections, will yet be loth to think it possible that they and the public at large can have been so long and so greatly imposed upon. And thus it is that the magnitude and boldness of a fraud become its best support: the millions who for so many ages have believed in Mahomet or Brahma, lean as it were on each other for support; and not having vigour of mind enough boldly to throw off vulgar prejudices, and dare be wiser than the multitude, persuade themselves that what so many have acknowledged, must be true. But I call on those who boast their philosophical freedom of thought, and would fain tread in the steps of Hume and other inquirers of the like exalted and speculative genius, to follow up fairly and fully their own principles, and, throwing off the shackles of authority, to examine carefully the evidence of whatever

is proposed to them, before they admit its truth.

That even in this enlightened age, as it is called, a whole nation may be egregiously imposed upon, even in matters which intimately concern them, may be proved (if it has not been already proved) by the following instance: it was stated in the newspapers, that, a month after the battle of Trafalgar, an English officer, who had been a prisoner of war, and was exchanged, returned to this country from France, and, beginning to condole with his countrymen on the terrible *defeat* they had sustained, was infinitely astonished to learn that the battle of Trafalgar was a splendid victory: he had been assured, he said, that in that battle the English had been totally defeated; and the French were fully and universally persuaded that such was the fact. Now if this report of the belief of the French nation was *not* true, the British Public were completely imposed upon; if it *were* true, then both nations were, at the same time, rejoicing in the event of the same battle, as a signal victory to themselves; and consequently one or other at least of these nations must have been the dupes of their Government: for if the battle was never fought at all, or was not decisive on either side, in that case *both*

parties were deceived. This instance, I conceive, is absolutely demonstrative of the point in question.

"But what shall we say to the testimony of "those many respectable persons who went to "Plymouth on purpose, and saw Buonaparte "with their own eyes? must they not trust "their senses?" I would not disparage either the eye-sight or the veracity of these gentlemen. I am ready to allow that they went to Plymouth for the purpose of seeing Buonaparte; nay more, that they actually rowed out into the harbour in a boat, and came alongside of a man-of-war, on whose deck they saw a man in a cocked hat, who, *they were told*, was Buonaparte. This is the utmost point to which their testimony goes; how they ascertained that this man in the cocked hat had gone through all the marvellous and romantic adventures with which we have so long been amused, we are not told. Did they perceive in his physiognomy, his true name, and authentic history? Truly this evidence is such as country-people give one for a story of apparitions; if you discover any signs of incredulity, they triumphantly shew the very house which the ghost haunted, the identical dark corner where it used to vanish, and perhaps even the tomb-

stone of the person whose death it foretold. Jack Cade's nobility was supported by the same irresistible kind of evidence: having asserted that the eldest son of Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, was stolen by a beggar-woman, "became a bricklayer when he came "to age," and was the father of the supposed Jack Cade: one of his companions confirms the story, by saying, "Sir, he made a chimney "in my father's house, and the bricks are "alive at this day to testify it; therefore deny "it not."

Much of the same kind is the testimony of our brave countrymen, who are ready to produce the scars they received in fighting against this terrible Buonaparte. That they fought and were wounded, they may safely testify; and probably they no less firmly *believe* what they were *told* respecting the cause in which they fought: it would have been a high breach of discipline to doubt it; and they, I conceive, are men better skilled in handling a musket, than in sifting evidence, and detecting imposture. But I defy any one of them to come forward and declare, *on his own knowledge*, what was the cause in which he fought,—under whose commands the opposed generals acted,—and whether the person who issued

those commands did really perform the mighty achievements we are told of.

Let those then who pretend to philosophical freedom of inquiry,—who scorn to rest their opinions on popular belief, and to shelter themselves under the example of the unthinking multitude, consider carefully each one for himself, what is the evidence proposed to himself in particular, for the existence of such a person as Napoleon Buonaparte: (I do not mean whether there ever was a person bearing that *name*, for that is a question of no consequence, but whether any such person ever performed all the wonderful things attributed to him); let him then weigh well the objections to that evidence, (of which I have given but a hasty and imperfect sketch,) and if he then finds it amount to any thing *more* than a probability, I have only to congratulate him on his easy faith.

But the same testimony which would have great weight in establishing a thing intrinsically probable, will lose part of this weight in proportion as the matter attested is improbable; and if adduced in support of any thing that is at variance with uniform experience,* will be

* "That testimony itself derives all its force from expe-
"rience, seems very certain. . . . . .
". . . The first author we believe, who stated fairly

rejected at once by all sound reasoners. Let us then consider what sort of a story it is that is proposed to our acceptance. How grossly contradictory are the reports of the different authorities, I have already remarked: but consider, by itself, the story told by any one of them; it carries an air of fiction and romance on the very face of it; all the events are great, and splendid, and marvellous;* great armies, great victories, great frosts, great reverses, "hair-"breadth 'scapes," empires subverted in a few days; every thing happening in defiance of political calculations, and in opposition to the *experience* of past times; every thing upon that grand scale, so common in Epic Poetry, so rare in real life; and thus calculated to strike the imagination of the vulgar,—and to remind the sober-thinking few of the Arabian Nights.

"the connexion between the evidence of testimony and "the evidence of experience, was HUME, in his Essay on "Miracles, a work . . . abounding in maxims of great use "in the conduct of life." *Edinb. Review*, Sept. 1814, p. 328.

* "Suppose, for instance, that the fact which the testimony "endeavours to establish partakes of the extraordinary and "the marvellous; in that case, the evidence resulting from "the testimony receives a diminution, greater or less in "proportion as the fact is more or less unusual." *Hume's Essay on Miracles*, p. 173. 12mo; p. 176. 8vo. 1767; p. 113. 8vo. 1817.

Every event too has that *roundness* and completeness which is so characteristic of fiction; nothing is done by halves; we have *complete* victories—*total* overthrows,—*entire* subversion of empires,—*perfect* reestablishments of them,—crowded upon us in rapid succession. To enumerate the improbabilities of each of the several parts of this history, would fill volumes; but they are so fresh in every one's memory, that there is no need of such a detail: let any judicious man, not ignorant of history and of human nature, revolve them in his mind, and consider how far they are conformable to Experience,* our best and only sure guide. In vain will he seek in history for something similar to this wonderful Buonaparte; "nought "but himself can be his parallel."

Will the conquests of Alexander be compared with his? *They* were effected over a rabble of effeminate undisciplined barbarians; else his progress would hardly have been so rapid: witness his father Philip, who was much longer occupied in subduing the comparatively insignificant territory of the warlike

* "The ultimate standard by which we determine all dis-"putes that may arise is always derived from experience "and observation." *Hume's Essay on Miracles*, p. 172. 12mo; p. 175. 8vo. 1767; p. 112. 8vo. 1817.

and civilized Greeks, notwithstanding their being divided into numerous petty states, whose mutual jealousy enabled him to contend with them separately. But the Greeks had never made such progress in arts and arms as the great and powerful states of Europe, which Buonaparte is represented as so speedily overpowering. His empire has been compared to the Roman: mark the contrast; he gains in a few years, that dominion, or at least control, over Germany, wealthy, civilized, and powerful, which the Romans in the plenitude of their power could not obtain, during a struggle of as many centuries, against the ignorant half-savages who then possessed it!

Another peculiar circumstance in the history of this extraordinary personage is, that when it is found convenient to represent him as defeated, though he is by no means defeated by halves, but involved in much more sudden and total ruin than the personages of real history usually meet with; yet, if it is thought fit he should be restored, it is done as quickly and completely as if Merlin's rod had been employed. He enters Russia with a prodigious army, which is totally ruined by an unprecedented hard winter; (every thing relating to this man is *prodigious* and *unprecedented*;) yet

in a few months we find him intrusted with another great army in Germany, which is also totally ruined at Leipsic; making, inclusive of the Egyptian, the third great army thus totally lost: yet the French are so good-natured as to furnish him with another, sufficient to make a formidable stand in France; he is however *conquered, and presented with the sovereignty of Elba;* (surely, by the bye, some more *probable* way might have been found of disposing of him, till again wanted, than to place him thus on the very verge of his ancient dominions;) thence he returns to France, where he is received with open arms, and enabled to lose a fifth great army at Waterloo: yet so eager were these people to be a sixth time led to destruction, that it was found necessary to confine *him* in an island some thousand miles off, and to quarter foreign troops upon *them*, lest they should make an insurrection in his favour!* Does any one believe all this, and yet refuse to believe a miracle? Or rather, what is this but a miracle? Is it not a

* Ἢ θαύματα πολλά.
Καὶ πού τι καὶ βροτῶν φρένας
ΥΠΕΡ ΤΟΝ ΑΛΗΘΗ ΛΟΓΟΝ
Δεδαιδαλμένοι ψεύδεσι ποικίλοις
Ἐξαπατῶντι μῦθοι. PIND. Olymp. 1.

violation of the laws of nature? for surely there are moral laws of nature as well as physical; which, though more liable to exceptions in this or that particular case, are no less *true as general rules* than the laws of matter, and therefore cannot be violated and contradicted *beyond a certain point*, without a miracle.*

* This doctrine, though hardly needing confirmation from authority, is supported by that of Hume: his eighth essay is, throughout, an argument for the doctrine of philosophical "necessity," drawn entirely from the general uniformity observable in the course of nature with respect to the principles of *human conduct*, as well as those of the material universe; from which uniformity, he observes, it is that we are enabled, *in both cases*, to form our judgments by means of *Experience*: "and if," says he, "we would explode any "forgery in history, we cannot make use of a more convin- "cing argument, than to prove that the actions ascribed to "any person, are directly contrary to the course of nature . "." . . . . . The veracity of "Quintus Curtius is as suspicious when he describes the "supernatural courage of Alexander, by which he was hur- "ried on singly to attack multitudes, as when he describes "his supernatural force and activity, by which he was able "to resist them. So readily and universally do we acknow- "ledge a *uniformity in human motives and actions as well as* "*in the operations of body.*" *Eighth Essay*, p. 131. 12mo; p. 85. 8vo. 1817.

Accordingly, in the tenth essay, his use of the term "mira- "cle," after having called it "a transgression of a law of "nature," plainly shews that he meant to include *human* nature: "no testimony," says he, "is sufficient to establish "a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a nature that its

Nay, there is this additional circumstance which renders the contradiction of Experience more glaring in this case than in that of the

" falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it " endeavours to establish:" the term " prodigy" also (which he all along employs as synonymous " with miracle" is applied to testimony, in the same manner, immediately after: " In the foregoing reasoning we have supposed . . . . . " that the falsehood of that testimony would be a kind of " prodigy." Now had he meant to confine the meaning of " miracle," and " prodigy," to a violation of the laws of *matter*, the epithet " *miraculous*," applied, even thus hypothetically, to *false testimony*, would be as unmeaning as the epithets " green," or " square;" the only possible sense in which we can apply to it, even in imagination, the term " miraculous," is that of " highly improbable,"—" contrary " to those laws of nature which respect human conduct:" and in this sense accordingly he uses the word in the very next sentence: " When any one tells me that he saw a dead man " restored to life, I immediately consider with myself whether " it be more *probable* that this person should either deceive " or be deceived, or that the fact which he relates should " really have happened. I weigh the one *miracle* against " the other." *Hume's Essay on Miracles*, p. 176, 177. 12mo; p. 182. 8vo. 1767; p. 115. 8vo. 1817.

See also a passage above quoted from the same essay, where he speaks of " the *miraculous* accounts of travellers;" evidently using the word in this sense. Perhaps it was superfluous to cite authority for applying the term " miracle" to whatever is highly " improbable;" but it is important to the students of Hume, to be fully aware that *he* uses those two expressions as synonymous; since otherwise they would mistake the meaning of that passage which he justly calls " a general maxim worthy of our attention."

miraculous histories which ingenious sceptics have held up to contempt: all the advocates of miracles admit that they are rare exceptions to the general course of nature; but contend that they must needs be so, on account of the rarity of those extraordinary *occasions* which are the *reason* of their being performed: a Miracle, they say, does not happen every day, because a Revelation is not given every day. It would be foreign to the present purpose to seek for arguments against this answer; I leave it to those who are engaged in the controversy, to find a reply to it; but my present object is, to point out that this solution does not at all apply in the present case. Where is the peculiarity of the *occasion?* What sufficient *reason* is there for a series of events occurring in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which never took place before? Was Europe at that period peculiarly weak, and in a state of barbarism, that one man could achieve such conquests, and acquire such a vast empire? On the contrary, she was flourishing in the height of strength and civilization. Can the persevering attachment and blind devotedness of the French to this man, be accounted for by his being the descendant of a long line of kings, whose race was

hallowed by hereditary veneration? No; we are told he was a low-born usurper, and not even a Frenchman! Is it that he was a good and kind sovereign? he is represented not only as an imperious and merciless despot, but as most wantonly careless of the lives of his soldiers. Could the French army and people have failed to hear from the wretched survivors of his supposed Russian expedition, how they had left the corpses of above 100,000 of their comrades bleaching on the snow-drifts of that dismal country, whither his mad ambition had conducted them, and where his selfish cowardice had deserted them? Wherever we turn to seek for circumstances that may help to account for the events of this incredible story, we only meet with such as aggravate its improbability.* Had it been told of some distant country, at a remote period, we could not have told what peculiar circumstances there might have been to render probable what seems to us most strange; and yet

* "Events may be so extraordinary that they can hardly "be established by testimony. We would not give credit to "a man who would affirm that he saw an hundred dice "thrown in the air, and that they all fell on the same faces." *Edinb. Review*, Sept. 1814, p. 327.

Let it be observed, that the instance here given is *miraculous* in no other sense but that of being highly *improbable*.

in *that* case every philosophical sceptic; every free-thinking speculator, would instantly have rejected such a history, as utterly unworthy of credit. What, for instance, would the great Hume, or any of the philosophers of his school have said, if they had found in the antique records of any nation such a passage as this: "There was a certain man of Corsica, whose "name was Napoleon, and he was one of the "chief captains of the host of the French; "and he gathered together an army, and went "and fought against Egypt: but when the "king of Britain heard thereof, he sent ships "of war and valiant men to fight against the "French in Egypt. So they warred against "them, and prevailed, and strengthened the "hands of the rulers of the land against the "French, and drave away Napoleon from be-"fore the city of Acre. Then Napoleon left "the captains and the army that were in "Egypt, and fled, and returned back to "France. So the French people took Na-"poleon, and made him ruler over them, and "he became exceeding great, insomuch that "there was none like him of all that had ruled "over France before."

What, I say, would Hume have thought of this, especially if he had been told that it was

at this day generally credited? Would he not have confessed that he had been mistaken in supposing there was a peculiarly blind credulity and prejudice in favour of every thing that is accounted *sacred*;* for that, since even professed sceptics swallow implicitly such a story as this, it appears there must be a still blinder prejudice in favour of every thing that is *not* accounted sacred?

Suppose, again, we found in this history such passages as the following: "And it came "to pass after these things that Napoleon "strengthened himself, and gathered together "another host instead of that which he had "lost, and went and warred against the Prus-"sians, and the Russians, and the Austrians, "and all the rulers of the north country, "which were confederate against him. And "the ruler of Sweden also, which was a "Frenchman, warred against Napoleon. So "they went forth, and fought against the "French in the plain of Leipsic. And the "French were discomfited before their enemies,

* "If the spirit of religion join itself to the love of wonder, "there is an end of common sense; and human testimony in "these circumstances loses all pretensions to authority." *Hume's Essay on Miracles*, p. 179. 12mo; p. 185. 8vo. 1767; p. 117. 8vo. 1817.

"and fled, and came to the rivers which "are behind Leipsic, and essayed to pass "over, that they might escape out of the hand "of their enemies; but they could not; for "Napoleon had broken down the bridges; "so the people of the north countries came "upon them, and smote them with a very "grievous slaughter." . . . . . .

. . . . .

"Then the ruler of Austria and all the "rulers of the north countries sent messengers "unto Napoleon to speak peaceably unto him, "saying, Why should there be war between "us any more? Now Napoleon had put "away his wife, and taken the daughter of "the ruler of Austria to wife. So all the "counsellors of Napoleon came and stood "before him, and said, Behold now these "kings are merciful kings; do even as they "say unto thee; knowest thou not yet that "France is destroyed? But he spake roughly "unto his counsellors, and drave them out "from his presence, neither would he hearken "unto their voice. And when all the kings "saw that, they warred against France, and "smote it with the edge of the sword, and "came near to Paris, which is the royal city, "to take it: so the men of Paris went out,

" and delivered up the city to them. Then " those kings spake kindly unto the men of " Paris, saying, Be of good cheer, there shall " no harm happen unto you. Then were the " men of Paris glad, and said, Napoleon is a " tyrant; he shall no more rule over us: also " all the princes, the judges, the counsellors, " and the captains, whom Napoleon had raised " up, even from the lowest of the people, sent " unto Lewis the brother of King Lewis, whom " they had slain, and made him king over " France." . . . . . .

. . . . .

" And when Napoleon saw that the king- " dom was departed from him, he said unto " the rulers which came against him, Let me, " I pray you, give the kingdom unto my son: " but they would not hearken unto him. Then " he spake yet again, saying, Let me, I pray " you, go and live in the island of Elba, which " is over against Italy, nigh unto the coast of " France; and ye shall give me an allowance " for me and my household, and the land of " Elba also for a possession. So they made " him ruler of Elba." . . . . . .

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. . . . . .

' In those days the Pope returned unto

" his own land. Now the French, and divers
" other nations of Europe, are servants of the
" Pope, and hold him in reverence; but he is
" an abomination unto the Britons, and to the
" Prussians, and to the Russians, and to the
" Swedes. Howbeit the French had taken
" away all his lands, and robbed him of all
" that he had, and carried him away captive
" into France. But when the Britons, and
" the Prussians, and the Russians, and the
" Swedes, and the rest of the nations that were
" confederate against France, came thither,
" they caused the French to set the Pope at
" liberty, and to restore all his goods that they
" had taken; likewise they gave him back all
" his possessions; and he went home in peace,
" and ruled over his own city as in times past."

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

" And it came to pass when Napoleon had
" not yet been a full year at Elba, that he
" said unto his men of war which clave unto
" him, Go to, let us go back to France, and
" fight against King Lewis, and thrust him
" out from being king. So he departed, he
" and 600 men with him that drew the sword,
" and warred against King Lewis. Then all the
" men of Belial gathered themselves together,

" and said, God save Napoleon. And when " Lewis saw that, he fled, and gat him into " the land of Batavia: and Napoleon ruled " over France." &c. &c. &c.

Now if a freethinking philosopher—one of those who advocate the cause of unbiassed reason, and despised pretended revelations—were to meet with such a tissue of absurdities as this, in an old Jewish record, would he not reject it at once as too palpable an imposture* to deserve even any inquiry into its evidence? Is that credible then of the civilized Europeans now, which could not, if reported of the semi-barbarous Jews 3000 years ago, be established by any testimony? Will it be answered, that " there is nothing *supernatural* in all this?" Why is it, then, that you object to what is *supernatural*—that you reject every account of *miracles*—if not because they are *improbable?* Surely then a story equally or still more

* " I desire any one to lay his hand upon his heart, and " after serious consideration declare, whether he thinks that " the falsehood of such a book, supported by such testimony, " would be more extraordinary and miraculous than all the " miracles it relates." *Hume's Essay on Miracles*, p. 200. 12mo; p. 206. 8vo. 1767; p. 131. 8vo. 1817.

Let it be borne in mind, that Hume (as I have above remarked) continually employs the terms " miracle" and " prodigy" to signify any thing that is highly *improbable* and *extraordinary*.

improbable, is not to be implicitly received, merely on the ground that it is *not* miraculous: though in fact, as I have already (in note p. 33.) shewn from Hume's authority, it really *is* miraculous. The opposition to Experience has been proved to be as complete in this case, as in what are commonly called miracles; and the reasons assigned for that contrariety by the defenders of *them*, cannot be pleaded in the present instance. If then philosophers, who reject every wonderful story that is maintained by priests, are yet found ready to believe *every thing else*, however improbable, they will surely lay themselves open to the accusation brought against them of being unduly prejudiced against whatever relates to religion.

There is one more circumstance which I cannot forbear mentioning, because it so much adds to the air of fiction which pervades every part of this marvellous tale; and that is, the *nationality* of it.*

Buonaparte prevailed over all the hostile states in turn, *except England;* in the zenith

* "The wise lend a very academic faith to every report "which favours the passion of the reporter, whether it mag- "nifies his *country*, his family, or himself." *Hume's Essay on Miracles*, p. 144. 12mo; p. 200. 8vo. 1767; p. 126. 8vo. 1817.

of his power, his fleets were swept from the sea, *by England;* his troops always defeat an equal, and frequently even a superior number of those of any other nation, *except the English;* and with them it is just the reverse; twice, and twice only, he is personally engaged against an *English commander*, and both times he is totally defeated; at Acre and at Waterloo; and, to crown all, *England* finally crushes this tremendous power, which has so long kept the continent in subjection or in alarm, and to the *English* he surrenders himself prisoner! Thoroughly national to be sure! It *may* be all very true; but I would only ask, *if* a story *had* been fabricated for the express purpose of amusing the English nation, could it have been contrived more ingeniously? It would do admirably for an epic poem; and indeed bears a considerable resemblance to the Iliad and the Æneid; in which Achilles and the Greeks, Æneas and the Trojans, (the ancestors of the Romans,) are so studiously held up to admiration. Buonaparte's exploits seem magnified in order to enhance the glory of his conquerors; just as Hector is allowed to triumph during the absence of Achilles, merely to give additional splendour to his overthrow by the arm of that invincible hero. Would not this circumstance

alone render a history rather *suspicious* in the eyes of an acute critic, even if it were not filled with such gross improbabilities; and induce him to suspend his judgment, till very satisfactory evidence (far stronger than can be found in this case) should be produced.

Is it then too much to demand of the wary academic* a suspension of judgment as to the "life and adventures of Napoleon Buonaparte?" I do not pretend to *decide* positively that there is not, nor ever was, any such person; but merely to propose it as a *doubtful* point, and one the more deserving of careful investigation, from the very circumstance of its having hitherto been admitted without inquiry. Far less would I undertake to decide what is, or has been, the real state of affairs: he who points out the improbability of the current story, is not bound to suggest an hypothesis of his own;† though it may safely be affirmed, that it would be hard to invent any, more

* "Nothing can be more contrary than such a philosophy" (the academic or sceptical) "to the supine indolence of the "mind, its rash arrogance, its lofty pretensions, and its "superstitious credulity." *Fifth Essay*, p. 68. 12mo; p. 41. 8vo. 1817.

† See Hume's Essay on Miracles, p. 189, 191, 195. 12mo; p. 193, 197, 201, 202. 8vo. 1767; p. 124, 125, 126. 8vo. 1817.

improbable than the received one. One may surely be allowed to hesitate in admitting the stories which the ancient poets tell, of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions being caused by imprisoned giants, without being called upon satisfactorily to account for those phenomena.

Amidst the defect of valid evidence under which, as I have already shewn, we labour in the present instance, it is hardly possible to offer more than here and there a probable conjecture; or to pronounce how much may be true, and how much fictitious, in the accounts presented to us. For it is to be observed that this case is much *more* open to sceptical doubts even than some miraculous histories; for some of them are of such a nature that you cannot consistently admit a part and reject the rest; but are bound, if you are satisfied as to the reality of any one miracle, to embrace the whole system; so that it is necessary for the sceptic to impeach the evidence of *all* of them, separately, and collectively: whereas *here*, each single point requires to be *established* separately, since no one of them authenticates the rest. Supposing there be a state-prisoner at St. Helena, (which, by the way, it is acknowledged many of the French disbelieve,) how do we know who he is, or why he is

confined there? There have been state-prisoners before now, who were never guilty of subjugating half Europe, and whose offences have been very imperfectly ascertained. Admitting that there have been bloody wars going on for several years past, which is highly probable, it does not follow that the events of those wars were such as we have been told;—that Buonaparte was the author and conductor of them;—or that such a person ever existed. What disturbances may have taken place in the government of the French people, we, and even nineteen-twentieths of *them*, have no means of learning but from imperfect hear-say evidence: but that there have been numerous bloody wars with France under the dominion of the *Bourbons*, we are well assured: and we are now told that France is governed by a Bourbon king, of the name of Lewis, who professes to be in the twenty-third year of his reign. Let every one conjecture for himself. I am far from pretending to decide who may have been the governor or governors of the French nation, and the leaders of their armies, for several years past. Certain it is, that when men are indulging their inclination for the marvellous, they always shew a strong

propensity to accumulate upon one individual (real or imaginary) the exploits of many; besides multiplying and exaggerating these exploits a thousand-fold. Thus, the expounders of the ancient mythology tell us there were several persons of the name of Hercules, (either originally bearing that appellation, or having it applied to them as an honour,) whose collective feats, after being dressed up in a sufficiently marvellous garb, were attributed to a single hero. Is it not just possible, that during the rage for words of Greek derivation, the title of "Napoleon" (Ναπολεων), which signifies "Lion "of the forest," may have been conferred by the popular voice on more than one favourite general, distinguished for irresistible valour? Is it not also possible that "BUONA PARTE" may have been originally a sort of cant term applied to the "good (i. e. the bravest or most patriotic) "part" of the French army, collectively; and have been afterwards mistaken for the proper name of an individual? I do not profess to support this conjecture; but it is certain that such mistakes may and do occur. Some critics have supposed that the Athenians imagined ANASTASIS ("Resurrection") to be a new goddess, in whose cause Paul was preaching.

Would it have been thought any thing incredible if we had been told that the ancient Persians, who had no idea of any but a monarchical government, had supposed Aristocratia to be a queen of Sparta? But we need not confine ourselves to hypothetical cases; it is positively stated that the Hindoos at this day believe "the honourable East India Company" to be a venerable old Lady of high dignity, residing in this country. The Germans of the present day derive their name from a similar mistake; the first tribe of them who invaded Gaul * assumed the honourable title of "*Ger-man*," which signifies "warrior;" (the words "war" and "guerre," as well as "man," which remains in our language unaltered, are evidently derived from the Teutonic,) and the Gauls applied this as a *name*, to the whole *race*.

However, I merely throw out these conjectures without by any means contending that more plausible ones might not be suggested.

* Germaniæ vocabulum recens et nuper additum; quoniam, qui primi Rhenum transgressi Gallos expulerint, ac nunc Tungri, tunc Germani vocati sint: ita nationis nomen in nomen gentis evaluisse paullatim, ut omnes, primum a victore ob metum, mox a seipsis invento nomine, Germani vocarentur. *Tacitus, de Mor. Germ.*

But whatever supposition we adopt, or whether we adopt any, the objections to the commonly-received accounts will remain in their full force, and imperiously demand the attention of the candid sceptic.

I call upon those therefore who profess themselves advocates of free inquiry,—who disdain to be carried along with the stream of popular opinion,—and who will listen to no testimony that runs counter to experience,—to follow up their own principles fairly and consistently. Let the same mode of argument be adopted in all cases alike; and then it can no longer be attributed to hostile prejudice, but to enlarged and philosophical views. If they have already rejected some histories, on the ground of their being strange and marvellous,—of their relating facts, unprecedented, and at variance with the established course of nature,—let them not give credit to another history which lies open to the very same objections,—the extraordinary and romantic tale we have been just considering. If they have discredited the testimony of witnesses, who are *said* at least to have been disinterested, and to have braved persecutions and death in support of their assertions,—can these philosophers

consistently listen to and believe the testimony of those who avowedly *get money* by the tales they publish, and who do not even pretend that they incur any serious risk in case of being detected in a falsehood? If in other cases they have refused to listen to an account which has passed through many intermediate hands before it reaches them, and which is defended by those who have an interest in maintaining it; let them consider through how many, and what very suspicious hands, *this* story has arrived to them, without the possibility (as I have shewn) of tracing it back to any decidedly authentic source, after all;* and likewise how strong an interest, in every way, those who have hitherto imposed on them, have, in keeping up the imposture. Let them, in short, shew themselves as ready to detect the cheats, and despise the fables, of politicians, as of priests.

But if they are still wedded to the popular belief in this point, let them be consistent enough to admit the same evidence in *other* cases, which they yield to, in *this*. If after

* For let it not be forgotten, that these writers, *themselves*, *refer* to no better authority than that of an *un-named and unknown* foreign correspondent.

all that has been said, they cannot bring themselves to doubt of the existence of Napoleon Buonaparte, they must at least acknowledge that they do not apply to that question, the same plan of reasoning which they have made use of in others; and they are consequently bound in reason and in honesty to renounce it altogether.

POSTSCRIPT TO THE THIRD EDITION.

It may seem arrogant for an obscure and nameless individual to claim the glory of having put to death the most formidable of all recorded heroes; but a shadowy champion may be overthrown by a shadowy antagonist. Many a terrific spectre has been laid by the beams of a halfpenny candle. And if I have succeeded in making out, in the foregoing pages, a probable case of suspicion, it must, I think, be admitted, that there is some ground for my present boast, of having *killed* Napoleon Buonaparte.

Let but the circumstances of the case be considered: This mighty Emperor, who had been so long the bugbear of the civilized world, after having obtained successes and undergone reverses, such as never befel any (other at least) *real* potentate, was at length sentenced to confinement in the remote island of St. Helena: a measure which many persons wondered at, and many objected to, on various grounds; not unreasonably, supposing the illustrious exile to be a real person: but on the supposition of his being only a man of straw, the situation was exceedingly favourable for keeping him out of the way of impertinent curiosity, when not wanted, and for making him the foundation of any new plots that there might be occasion to conjure up.

About this juncture it was that the public attention was first invited by these pages, to the question as to the real existence of Napoleon Buonaparte. They excited, it may be fairly supposed, along with much surprise and much censure, some degree of doubt, and, probably, of consequent inquiry. No fresh evidence, as far as I can learn, of the truth of the disputed points, was brought forward to dispel these doubts. We heard, however, of the most jealous precautions being used to prevent any intercourse between the formidable prisoner, and any stranger, who, from motives of curiosity, might wish to visit him. The "man in the iron mask" could hardly have been more rigorously secluded: and we also heard various contradictory reports of conversations between him and the few who were allowed access to him: the falsehood and inconsistency of most of these reports being proved in contemporary publications.

At length, just about the time when the public scepticism respecting this extraordinary personage might be supposed to have risen to an alarming height, it was announced to us that he was dead! A stop was thus put, most opportunely, to all troublesome inquiries. I do not undertake to deny that such a person did live and die. That he was, and that he did, *every thing* that is reported, we cannot believe, unless we consent to admit contradictory statements; but many of the events recorded, however marvellous, are certainly not physically impossible. But I would only entreat the candid reader to reflect what might naturally be expected, on the supposition of the surmises contained in the present

work being well-founded. Supposing the whole of the tale I have been considering to have been a fabrication, what would be the natural result of such an attempt to excite inquiry into its truth? Evidently the shortest and most effectual mode of eluding detection would be to *kill* the phantom, and so get rid of him at once. A ready and decisive answer would thus be provided to any one in whom the foregoing arguments might have excited suspicions: "Sir, there can be no doubt such a person existed, and performed what is related of him; and if you will just take a voyage to St. Helena, you may see with your own eyes,—not him indeed, for he is no longer living,—but his *tomb:* and what evidence would you have that is more decisive?"

So much for his *Death:* as for his *Life,*—it is just published by an eminent writer: besides which, the shops will supply us with abundance of busts and prints of this great man; all striking likenesses—of one another. The most incredulous must be satisfied with this! "Stat magni NOMINIS umbra!"

KONX OMPAX.

FINIS.

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD-STREET-HILL.